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Proud of America!

# THE epicenter

Newsletter of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) • March 2004

## Special JCAHO Preparedness Edition

### Survey Readiness

#### What is an accreditation survey?

Our facility is reviewed by numerous outside agencies such as, Joint Commission Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), College of American Pathologists (CAP), Commission on Cancer, and other federal and state regulator agencies.

#### Electronic Access to Standards

To electronically view various regulatory standards:

- Go to a computer on an internet site and type in "VAPAWEB".
- Once on the VAPAWEB homepage, click on the Service Section tool bar
- Click on the Quality Management/ Safety link

Surveys can be both scheduled or unannounced. Our health care system must be in a state of continued readiness.

This issue contains important information for staff to prepare for the upcoming JCAHO survey.

#### Readiness Checklist

1. Know how to access policies and procedures (HCSM's) on the VISTA system or in your Service Section on the VAPAHCS intranet website, "VAPAWEB".
2. Be aware of your policies and follow them. These include fire, disaster, and safety procedures; infection control guidelines; and staff guidelines.
3. Physicians: Be familiar with your Bylaws.
4. Read materials from your supervisor. Check your email regularly.
5. Participate in Mock Surveys and any training sessions.
6. Reference the VAPAHCS intranet website "VAPAWEB" for ongoing updates.

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# A Word From Our Director



**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman, Director  
VA Palo Alto Health Care System**

We are now reaching our final stages of preparation for our upcoming JCAHO survey. Our survey dates were revised slightly. The survey will now begin Tuesday, March 30 and conclude Monday, April 5. As we all know, surveyors are free to visit our health care system evenings and weekends during the survey period. I am very thankful to all of you for the many steps you are taking to educate and prepare staff and volunteers as to the

new survey methodology and the seven JCAHO patient safety goals. Our Quality Management Service has ordered additional cards displaying those goals (Improving the accuracy of patient identification; Improving the effectiveness of communication among caregivers; Improving the safety of using high-alert medications; Eliminating wrong-site, wrong-patient and wrong-procedure surgery; Improving the safety of using infusion pumps; Improving the effectiveness of clinical alarm systems; Reducing the risk of health-acquired infections). The results of our mock surveys were largely positive and many actions are in place to strengthen areas identified for improvement.

The CARES Commission released their long awaited report to the public on February 13, 2004. Page 5-341 of the report addresses the Livermore Campus realignment issues. The report states:

1. The Commission does not concur with the DNCP (Draft National Cares Plan) proposal that nursing home care at Livermore be transferred to Menlo Park and the community.
2. The Commission recommends that the long-term care (LTC) services (nursing home beds) at Livermore be retained as a freestanding nursing home care unit.

3. The Commission concurs with the DNCP proposal to transfer sub-acute beds to Palo Alto.
4. The Commission concurs with the DNCP proposal to shift outpatient care to CBOCs.

VA Secretary Principi has said he will take approximately 30 days to review the commission's findings before making a final decision. During that time, VA will not comment publicly on the report.

I have met with Livermore staff and volunteers to ensure they are aware of the CARES Commission's recommendations and the timeline for receipt of a decision from the Secretary. I realize this is an enormously difficult and emotional process. I remain committed to sharing as much information as possible in a timely manner to all of our stakeholders. I appreciate the continued patience and commitment of the Livermore staff through this process.

Last month, I described the strategic planning initiatives we have launched in various areas. At the same time, we are critically examining the number of clinical programs we can continue to support now and in the future given what may prove to be extremely challenging fiscal constraints. Please be assured we will never sacrifice the quality of the services we offer, nor will we make decisions in isolation. The VA Palo Alto Health Care System is and will continue to be a flagship tertiary care research and teaching institution. I look forward to you continued support and cooperation as we prepare for the future.

Finally, let me congratulate Dr. Eugene Butcher, who has just recently been named a co-recipient of The Crafoord Prize in Polyarthrititis 2004 for his studies on the molecular mechanisms involved in migration of white blood cells in health and disease. The Crafoord Prize was established in 1980 and is awarded from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences to promote basic research in mathematics, astronomy, the biosciences (particularly ecology), the geosciences and polyarthrititis. The prize winner gives a public lecture at the Swedish Academy in the early autumn and shares in a prize of \$500,000. Please congratulate Eugene on this wonderful recognition of his research accomplishments.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth J. Freeman'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'J' and 'F'.

Elizabeth Joyce Freeman  
Director

# Tips for Talking to Surveyors

## What are some tips when talking to surveyors?

- Think carefully before answering questions. Take time to consider what the surveyor wants to know. Be sure to ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Be honest. If you don't know an answer, don't guess. Tell the surveyor how you would find an answer. This could include asking your Service Chief or supervisor, or referencing a policy or written document.
- Reply to surveyors' questions directly and concisely.
- If you are asked to participate in a group interview, make sure you attend and arrive on time!
- Be prepared and relax. This is a time to answer with confidence; be friendly and polite.

## What can we expect from the surveyors on the patient units?

During this time a surveyor may:

- Talk with different staff members, including medical staff, nursing staff, managers, patient care interdisciplinary team members, and support staff.

- Discuss policies and procedures, staffing and/or other patient care issues.
- Observe procedures in actions and determine how well the staff delivers care and interacts with the patients and families.
- Review patient charts closely. The surveyor may pick a chart(s) on each unit for an in-depth evaluation.
- Ask the caregivers about how they work together on the patient's assessments, care plan and education.
- Meet with the patients that give their permission to be interviewed. They may ask what the patients know about their medications, treatment, and/or care plan.

The JCAHO Medical Records Review emphasis is now on open or current charts, versus closed charts. The majority of records will be selected while the surveyor is in your clinical area. An increased amount of survey time will be spent in patient care areas.

Keep your medical records in good order and the documentation current at all times!

# VAPAHCS Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Core Values

The Mission Statement describes the fundamental purpose of our organization.

## VAPAHCS Mission Statement

The mission of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System is to serve the veterans with compassionate, comprehensive, accessible quality care in a safe and supportive environment while promoting excellence in research and education.

The Vision Statement guides the direction of our organizational development and portrays the ultimate achievement of the VAPAHCS.

## VAPAHCS Vision Statement

The VA Palo Alto Health Care system will provide veterans and

others, whom we serve, with an efficient, integrated and coordinated system of patient care; will be a valued community resource; an employer of choice; and an international leader in research and education.

After receiving input from veterans in all of the VHA facilities, here are the five VHA Core Values.

## Core Values: Trust, Respect, Commitment, Compassion and Excellence

Our Core Values define the ethical framework, which will guide this organization into the future.

# Patient Safety Program

**The VAPAHCS Patient Safety Program is comprised of the following essential components:**

- a.** Prevention of patient injury, through early and appropriate response and reporting of evident and potential problems.
- b.** Analysis of adverse or near miss events, or unsafe patient safety conditions to develop the most accurate picture of what actually happens during the delivery of health care.
- c.** Identification of underlying causes contributing to adverse or near miss events, or unsafe conditions to prevent recurrence and make improvement.
- d.** Open communication among staff, patients, family/significant others and /or volunteers to improve patient safety by establishing a culture of trust, honesty and integrity.
- e.** Patient involvement as an active, involved and informed member of the health care team.
- f.** Recognition that health care is fallible and involves multiple systems; therefore a systems approach to emphasize prevention, not punishment, is used for patient safety improvements.
- g.** Use of pertinent literature, scientific knowledge and best practices when developing action plans.
- h.** Sharing lessons learned following the review of adverse events, near misses and unsafe conditions throughout the organization.
- i.** Dissemination of patient safety alert information to determine if similar hazards are present with implementation of appropriate recommendations.

## Emergency Code Numbers

**The basic emergency number for any emergency anywhere within VAPAHCS is extension 65500.**

- This extension 65500 can be dialed directly from the Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Livermore Divisions and San Jose Clinic
- For Monterey and Modesto, dial the main Palo Alto Division number 650-493-5000, extension 65500 for VAPAHCS assistance.
- For the Stockton Clinic, first dial number 99 for local assistance, and then call the Palo Alto Division number 650-493-5000, extension 65500 for VAPAHCS assistance.
- For the Sonora Clinic, First dial 911 for local assistance and then call the Palo Alto Division number 650-493-5000, extension 65500 for VAPAHCS assistance.

The VAPAHCS Operator answers all 65500 calls; and the Emergency Room, VA Police and the boiler plant listen-in, and they may discuss among themselves who will follow-up with the call.

### Bomb Threat

Call the emergency number (65500) and follow direction of the Police Dispatch.

### Disaster

The Operator will announce a Code D-Internal for an internal disaster and a Code D-External for an external disaster. When it is all clear or over, a Code D-All Clear will be called. Code D's are at the direction only of the health care system Director or Emergency Incident Commander.

A Code 66 and the location is announced overhead by the operator in the event of a full medical code. Team members will also be paged.

### Fire

For a Code Red (Fire), the Police Dispatch will follow up by dialing extension 65500 and take responsibility for dispatching the necessary responses to the scene.

### Medical Emergency

For a critical care (non-code) emergency at the Palo Alto Division, the Operator will call MSICU and place a page for the Urgent Response Team. All other areas, divisions and clinics follow you medical response procedures.

### Violent Patient

Call the emergency number at extension 65500.

# EMPLOYEE NEWS

## New Employees

Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt. Svc.  
**Raymond Battle**

Business Office  
**Donald Pham**

CCA  
**Susan Battjer**

Medical Svc.  
**Johnny L. Chin**  
**Rochelle Villanueva**

Nursing Svc.  
**Edwin T. Tajalle**

Police Svc.  
**James A Tyler**  
**Cesar D. Umali**

Psychiatry Svc.  
**Karla Jean Smith**

Radiology Svc.  
**Anne Chitwood**

Research Svc.  
**Christine M. Stansbury**  
**Jesse P. Velez**

Social Work Svc.  
**Amy Alderman**  
**Renee Burgard**  
**Daniel Phillips**

## Retirees

Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt. Svc.  
**Henry (Ski) Kwiatkowski (40)**

Nursing Svc.  
**Gloria Poynter (19)**

Research Svc.  
**James Anderson (26)**

*(Years of service are  
indicated in parentheses.)*

## Employee Service Awards

### 10 Years

**Penelope Adams**  
Nursing Svc.

**Harold Boritz**  
Vet Center

**Martin Vazquez**  
Dermatology Svc.

### 15 Years

**Corazon Auxilio**  
Nursing Svc.

**Romeo Bayaua**  
Nursing Svc.

**Laura Bencomo**  
Nursing Svc.

**Clyde Bickford**  
Anesthesiology Svc.

**Theresa Branham**  
Social Work Svc.

**Larcy Devinzi**  
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

**Helen Godhigh**  
Nursing Svc.

**Christie Hall**  
Nursing Svc.

**Leah Holloway**  
Research Svc.

**Laurie Housel**  
Nursing Svc.

**Evelyn Lazatin**  
Business Office

**Aida Meneses**  
Nursing Svc.

**Graciela Meneses**  
Nursing Svc.

**Marion Rabena**  
Nursing Svc.

**Marites Relos**  
Nursing Svc.

**Ronald Robinson**  
Psychology Svc.

**Hardev Sandher**  
Nursing Svc.

**Queen Villegas**  
Nursing Svc.

**Robert Walker**  
Recreation Svc.

### 20 Years

**Philip Raisanen**  
Psychiatry Svc.

**Barbara Reyburn**  
Nursing Svc.

**Marlene Rodulfa**  
Nursing Svc.

### 25 Years

**Fannie Parise**  
Nursing Svc.

### 30 Years

**Gretchen Roberts**  
Canteen Svc.

### 35 Years

**Gordie Bruce**  
Nutrition & Food Svc.

**Michael Tuttle**  
Environmental Mgmt Svc.

# Don't Forget Fire Safety!

## RACE

- R** - Remove all persons in immediate danger.
- A** - Activate a fire alarm.
- C** - Confine the fire.
- E** - Evacuate occupants.  
Or Extinguish the fire, if you are trained, using PASS.

## PASS

- P** - Pull the pin.
- A** - Aim at the base of the fire.
- S** - Squeeze the level or handle.
- S** - Sweep extinguisher from side to side.

## VAPAHCS V.I.P. Quiz

Match the following people with their appropriate title.

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| _____ Privacy Officer                    | A. John Sisty              |
| _____ Acting Compliance Officer          | B. Fred Williams           |
| _____ Health Care System Director        | C. Christopher Oigny       |
| _____ Quality Management Service Chief   | D. Phil Wong               |
| _____ Chief of Staff                     | E. Elizabeth Joyce Freeman |
| _____ Information Security Officer (ISO) | F. Javaid Shiekh           |
| _____ Safety Officer                     | G. Christopher Oigny       |
| _____ Industrial Hygienist               | H. Pat Allyn               |
| _____ Infection Control                  | I. Ana Marie Vitente       |
| _____ Associate Director                 | J. Debasis Malakar         |
| _____ Lead Patient Advocate              | K. Joe Russo               |
| _____ Research Compliance Officer        | L. Gina Oda                |

**Answers:**

I Privacy Officer	D Information Security Officer (ISO)
C Acting Compliance Officer	F Chief of Staff
E Health Care System Director	H Quality Management Service Chief
A Associate Director	J Industrial Hygienist
K Lead Patient Advocate	L Infection Control
G Research Compliance Officer	B Safety Officer



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Submissions should be received by  
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Due to space limitations, it is not  
possible to publish all submissions.

We welcome any comments,  
suggestions or story ideas  
you may have; please contact the  
Communications Officer (00A) at  
ext. 64888 or directly at  
650-858-3925.

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